

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TAGS: SPOP, NZ

SUBJECT: NZ HAS A NET MIGRATION LOSS OF NEARLY 5000 IN ONE YEAR

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. ACCORDING TO PROVISIONAL FIGURES RELEASED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS ON AUGUST 26, FOR THE YEAR ENDING JULY 31, 1976 NEW ZEALAND HAD A NET MIGRATION LOSS TO POPULATION OF 4,990. (A YEAR EARLIER NZ GAINED 24,129 IN NET MIGRATION AND IN THE JULY 1974 YEAR 26,532.)

2. THOUGH THERE IS A NORMAL NET MIGRATION OUTFLOW DURING THE FIRST FEW MONTHS FOLLOWING MARCH, THIS YEAR THE APRIL-JULY OUTFLOW WAS 39,573 VS. 27,824 AND 22,484 FOR THE SAME RESPECTIVE PERIODS OF 1975 AND 1974.

3. IN JULY 1976 THE NET LOSS WAS 3,230, OVER 3 TIMES THE LOSS A YEAR EARLIER. END UNCLASSIFIED

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4. COMMENT: ONE OF THE PLANKS OF THE NATIONAL PARTY, STRESSED BY PARTY LEADER - AND NOW PRIME MINISTER, R.D. MULDOON, DURING THE CAMPAIGN PRECEDING THE NOVEMBER 1975 ELECTION WAS A REDUCTION IN IMMIGRATION. THE AREAS WHICH

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WERE THE MAIN SOURCES OF MOST OF NZ'S IMMIGRANTS WERE THE

NEIGHBORING SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AND THE U.K. SINCE TAKING OFFICE IN DECEMBER 1975, THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S POLICY HAS BEEN TO RESTRAIN IMMIGRATION AND TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN NZ FROM THE NEIGHBORING SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS. THIS HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AMONG THE POLYNESIAN POPULATION IN NZ AS WELL AS A REACTION (ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL) AMONG NZ'S SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND NEIGHBORS. AT THE SAME TIME GNZ HAS BEEN STRIVING TO WIND DOWN THE ECONOMY AS A MEANS OF REDUCING THE UNSUSTAINABLE DEMAND FOR IMPORTS. ALSO, DRASTIC MEASURES TO CUT THE GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES HAVE MEANT A REDUCTION IN AN IMPORTANT SECTOR (42 PER CENT OF GNP) OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY. THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION AND THE MEDIA HAVE SEIZED ON THE LATEST MIGRATION FIGURES TO RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF A "BRAIN DRAIN" DUE TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC AND MIGRATION POLICIES. THE MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION HAS RESSPONDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS WATCHING THE MIGRATION FIGURES CAREFULLY AND IS NOW DEVELOPING INFORMATION ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE NET OUTFLOW TO SEE IF CORRECTIVE ACTION NEED OR SHOULD BE TAKEN. THE "BRAIN DRAIN" IS A POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE (AND POLITICAL) ISSUE IN NZ. DURING THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED PERIODS OF THE THE LATE 1960'S AND EARLY 1970'S UNDER THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT EXODUS OF TRAINED AND/OR EDUCATED NEW ZEALANDERS SEEKING BETTER OPPORTUNITIES ELSEWHERE. THOUGH THERE ARE NO MORE DETAILED FIGURES YET AVAILABLE ON WHICH TO DISPROVE THE "BRAIN DRAIN" CHARGE BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE PROPORTION OF THE NET MIGRATION LOSS ATTRIBUTABLE TO DEPARTURES OF LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF NEW ZEALAND IS SMALL. THE REDUCTION IN ARRIVALS FROM THE NEIGHBORING SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS AND THE U.K. ALONG WITH AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF POLYNESIANS RETURNING TO THEIR ISLANDS SHOULD ACCOUNT FOR MOST OF THIS NET MIGRATION.

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